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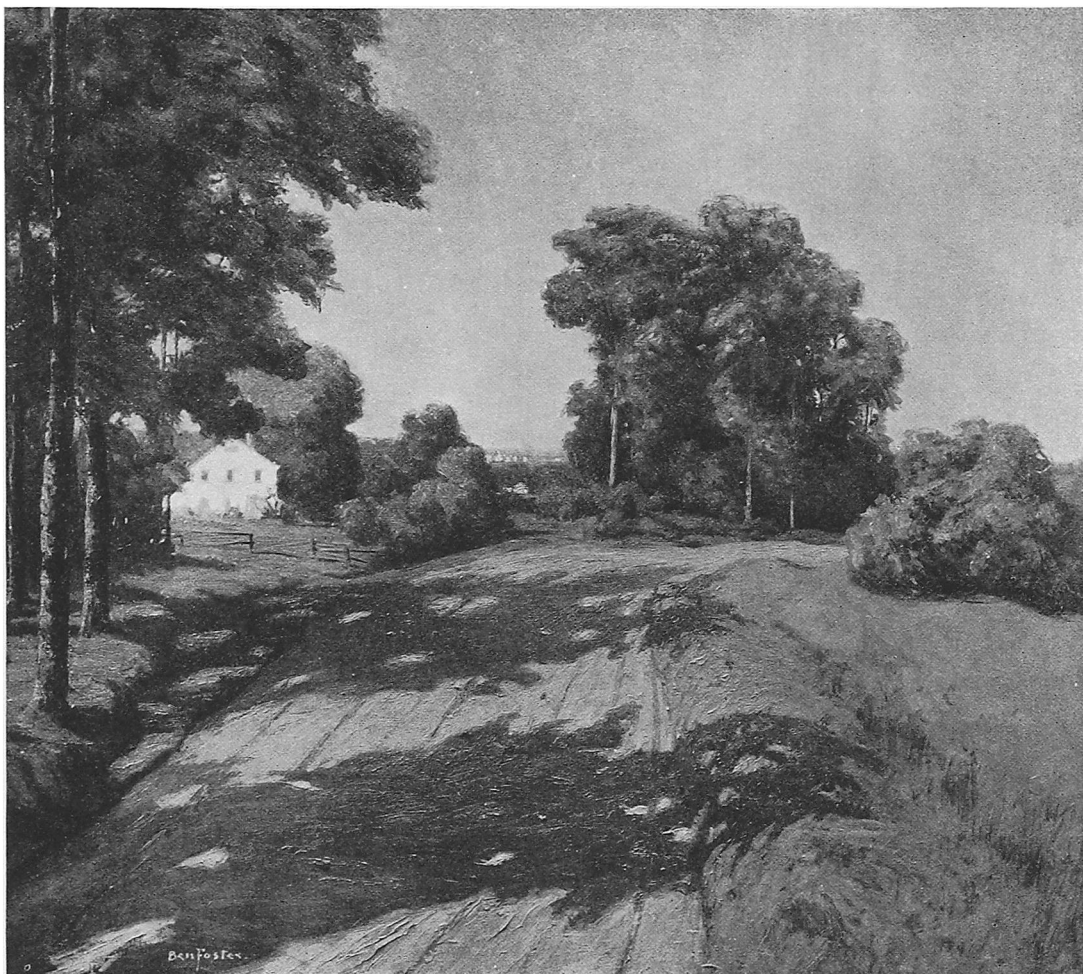
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LANDSCAPE
By Ben Foster

A Collection of Ben Foster's Landscapes

By THE EDITOR

“TWILIGHT and the evening star,” autumn and the deep woods, this was the first impression produced by the works of Ben Foster recently shown at the Art Institute, Chicago, and the last which one carried away. This and his mastery of tone linger in the memory and the charm of this unusually well received exhibition seems not to have been lost even upon the most casual observers.

A certain companionableness in the quiet

delight of nature's beauties seems to draw one toward and into these exquisite landscapes, a feeling which has been beautifully expressed in the following verse appearing in the *Chicago Tribune*, under the title “Ben Foster” and with the signature “C. S. P. W.”:

“He said, ‘I do not paint the human form;
I like my pictures better without people.’
Yet I am there beside his Quiet Water,
Hid in the soft brown shadow by the brook.
And yesterday I traveled his Long Road.



OCTOBER'S CLOSE
By Ben Foster

The dust of it is still upon my feet.
I'm standing in his Garden picking pods
Off his tall hollyhocks when they are ripe.
I broke a marigold bud and dropped it there
In the right foreground where you see it lie.
Sometimes I wonder if he sees me there;
And does he know he cannot paint me out?"

Connoisseurs, artists and the general public delighted in this exhibition for its beauties were immediately perceptible to layman or to child and its art so subtle, the technique so simple yet sure, that these pictures were at once the joy and despair of the critic. The greater the art in a picture the harder it is to compel the mind to the dry task of analysis. Even a botanist who could bring the most casual assurance to the dissection of a

wayside daisy might shrink from tearing apart the velvety petals of an orchid. It seems too, a bit on the order of gilding refined gold or painting the lily to say anything about an art that speaks so plainly for itself.

In the presence of a composition which sings to the soul the song of living nature it becomes almost a sacrilege to think of the medium. Indeed when an artist follows Whistler's formula and mixes his paint with brains, it is the brains, not the paint, that we are most aware of in his pictures. Their sentiments become the precious metal while the pigment is only the alloy which carries it. And so it is with Foster. Everything in his pictures is so well done that methods and means are forgotten in the contemplation of



RISING MOON
By Ben Foster

results. A very complete art indeed is that which combines excellence in color, composition, texture and tone with a strong pictorial quality, an art which is satisfying and leaves little to be desired.

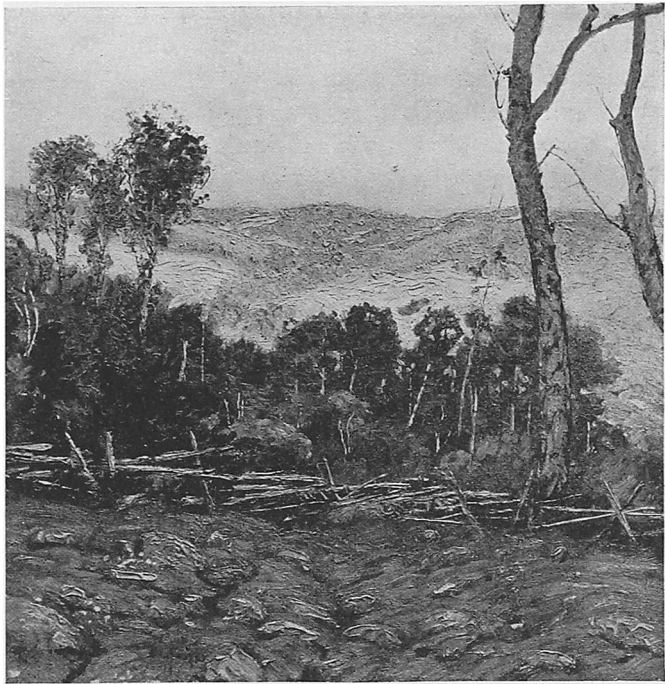
As to the blending characteristics of Foster's work one cannot forget his quiet skies, rich but low keyed color, and feeling of love for the shadows and the glories of the dying year. Not that this collection contained no spring pictures,—for one of the most successful, "Coming Night," herewith illustrated, is a study of the early approach of spring,—but that so many of its most brilliant canvases were in the tawny reds, browns, and grays of autumn with touches of darker evergreen among the swift changing trees. Furthermore

no Foster is ever cheap in color or in sentiment, for always his mellow and colorful canvases are far removed from the vivid, gay or raw hues that make so many of our modern landscapes appear too distressingly new. On the other hand they are not of the monotonous sort as of one whose productions seem to reflect nature through grey eyeglasses or while in a brown study. They appear to be absolutely true in color to the time of day and year presented, with a preference shown for the opulent and mellow seasons under subdued light. They produce an exquisite feeling of harmony that proclaims the master of tone and their occasional flashes of luminosity are well achieved.

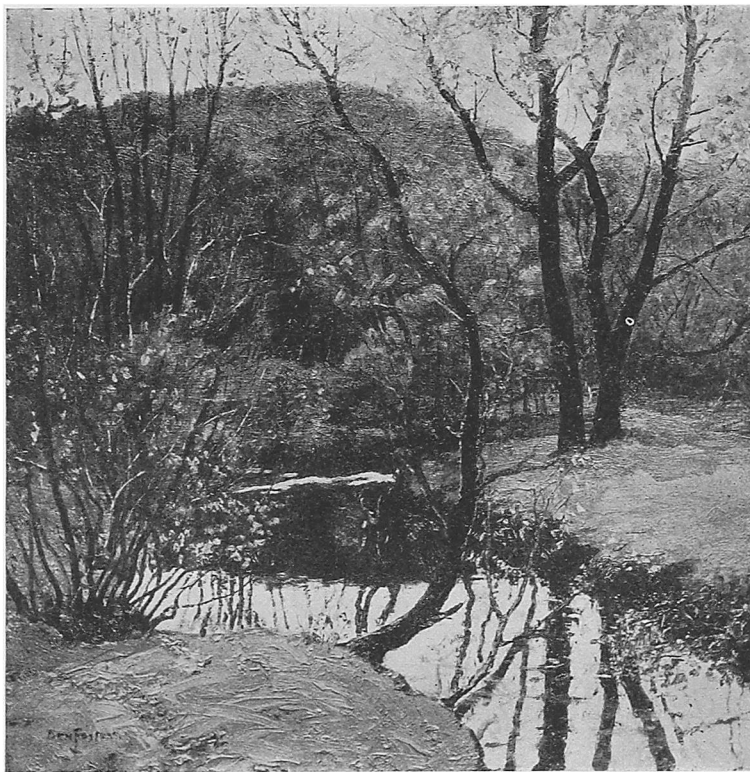
"Deep in the Maine Woods" is one of the

pictures in which an effect of vivid sunlight appears, but even here it is sunlight sifted through the branches of fragrant pines into the shadowy depths of the forest. This picture is remarkable also for the decorative and delightful effect of the lacy tracies of the bare ground branches just below the full green of the bushy needles, and the little flecks of blue sky seen through the rifts of the boughs. At close range all is so simple each brush stroke seeming to have been carelessly put in place with one swift touch, that it is difficult to comprehend how so much feeling of warmth and texture has been achieved in the sunlit patches of green beneath the trees. "Twilight in the Forest" was another woodland interior of much simplicity and charm.

"October's Close" was one of the



BEYOND THE TREE TOPS
By Ben Foster



COMING NIGHT
By Ben Foster

larger and more important canvases which offered a rather lighter-toned effect than many of the studies of fall. The terra cotta warmth of the woodland carpet of fallen leaves, the silvery grey tree trunks, and the pale opal sky, all seemed to be emphasized in their harmony through the little touch of light reflected from the glimpse of a stream at the foot of the hill.

Another of the larger canvases entitled simply "Landscape" gave a fine impression of moonlight and moon shadows. It was almost a monotone of cold blue with gold points of stars in the sky and a grey reflection from a white house at some distance. Across the road, winding

up from the foreground, fell the shadows of tall trees, all in that unearthly stillness of a calm moonlit summer night.

"Evening in the Hills" was as poetic as its title, the white birches with their dull green foliage standing unmoved by even a passing breeze, under a blue sky almost obscured by grey clouds with the faintest dying glow of sunset pink. Something about this picture recalls a Whittier, though whether it was only the similarity in title to that of one of his poems, or a more subtle bond of spiritual quality in the works of art in two different mediums, it would be difficult to say.

"On Sandy Creek" is so true to its name that it scarcely needed the title. The dun-colored banks, with mauve-shaded edges, the yellowish grey stream with its quiet water shadows and reflections, are all completely suggestive of a sandy soil. Sky and water are

of one hue, for though the sun is setting the upper heavens are calm and pale. The deep and lighter greens of the trees complete a quiet color scheme with one spot of brilliance in the golden ball of the declining sun gleaming through the branches.

"Rising Moon" was a picture never to be forgotten, one of those things of which people whose life is spent among pictures retain an impression for the collection that hangs on the inner chamber of the heart. Its reddish brown hills and dark evergreens and the white moon rising above the distant wall of grey, were all full-toned or minor chords in a nocturne of supreme harmony. Another deliciously colored autumn theme was "Meadows, November"; its dark bank of hills, the reddish purple of wine, its quiet meadow gold and ruddy and grey-green, with a grey-gold pool reflecting a pale clear sky and the rich purple of the hills.



MEADOWS, NOVEMBER
By Ben Foster